PPLS alumni event

A joint collaboration between PPLS and the Careers Service. Chaired by Head of School, to give Honours students the opportunity to meet recent graduates from PPLS.

**School:** Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

**Target Audience:**3rd and 4th Year PPLS undergraduate students

**Staff Involved:** Careers Advisers for PPLS, PPLS Learning and Teaching Projects Coordinator, PPLS Assistant Secretary

**Date/timing:** February 2011 (early evening), with plans to rerun yearly in Innovative Learning week

Key features

The aims of the event were to:

* introduce current undergraduate students to graduates from their subject areas in order to gain an insight on the kinds of careers available to graduates of our undergraduate programmes; and
* encourage current undergraduate students to research options and gain experience and skills sooner, rather than later, for their future careers.

Planning

* Initial planning meeting with UG Director, Careers Advisers for PPLS and PPLS Learning and Teaching Projects Coordinator to set format of event.
* Meeting with Careers Advisers for PPLS and PPLS Learning and Teaching Projects Coordinator to set date, time, book an appropriate venue and formulate an action plan.
* Identifying suitable alumni to approach to take part in the event via PPLS academic staff, Careers Service and Alumni Office.
* PPLS Alumni Database established – contact and work experience detailed.
* Further meeting of Careers Advisers for PPLS and PPLS Learning and Teaching Projects Coordinators to coordinate which alumni to be contacted and invited to speak.
* Liaise with PPLS and Careers Service as to which alumni were available, coordinate letters/communication and to ask Alumni to submit case studies.
* PPLS arranged team of helpers for the event and an Assistant Secretary to assist with name badges, posters and other practical arrangements e.g. catering.
* Pre-event planning meeting to set schedule and liaising with chair person & speakers about event administration.
* Careers Service prepared posters and case study booklet.
* Promoting the event to students via PPLS website, email invites to students, posters.
* Event day – welcome signage to venue, reception team to welcome speakers and attendees, prepare catering area and notice boards with case studies.
* Obtaining feedback and reviewing the event via debrief meeting post-event with PPLS and Careers Service.

Event

* Short presentations by recent graduates who talked about the work they have had since graduation and what helped them to get to where they are today.  Held in lecture room – informally laid out.
* Attendees given a booklet containing case studies of recent alumni.
* An open-to-question session, after the presentations, with the alumni, Careers Service and PPLS staff.
* Drinks and finger buffet reception in open concourse to enable informal questioning and networking between alumni and students.
* Speakers included recent PPLS graduates who are working in thefollowing jobs:
  + clinical psychologist
  + advertising planner
  + mental health advocacy worker
  + social researcher
  + teacher
  + chartered occupational psychologist
  + film producer
  + education officer with the RSPB
* Additional alumni present at networking session to meet with students.

Resources

* See Planning section (above)
* Catering and travel costs funded by PPLS

Evaluation

* Event considered to be a success – with a good turn out of students and staff.
* Many students waited to speak to alumni at the networking session and such was the demand that alumni volunteered to give contact email addresses to students as not sufficient time to speak to them all.
* Feed back was all positive; see comments below.

*“I am more than happy to help out on events like that - I think careers advice, especially from recent graduates, is very important and I'm glad it was a success.”*

*“Thank you for inviting me, it felt like a successful evening and I was glad to be involved. Please let me know if I can provide support for similar events in the future.”*

*“The evening seemed very well received by the students and I hope I was able to give them some relevant information about the course! It felt like a really useful event for undergraduates.”*

*“I just wanted to echo the congratulations. From what I saw, and from the feedback I've seen since, this was a great success.”*

*“Many congratulations for a very well organised and successful careers event. The talks were really fascinating and inspiring.”*

Advice

* Do maintain an alumni database for future events/initiatives
* Do make sure there is academic support
* Do involve student reps and Societies
* Do advertise widely
* Don’t under-estimate the time and effort it takes to coordiate such an event
* Don’t see it as a one off event but as a springboard for other alumni/careers related activities

Key contacts

[Judy McCulloch](mailto:Judy.McCulloch@ed.ac.uk), PPLS Learning and Teaching Projects Coordinator

Dr [Sharon Maguire](mailto:Sharon.Maguire@ed.ac.uk) and [Elizabeth Mortimer](mailto:Elizabeth.Mortimer@ed.ac.uk), Careers Advisers for PPLS

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/staff-information/how-employability-addressed/good-practice/hss/ppls-alumni-event>